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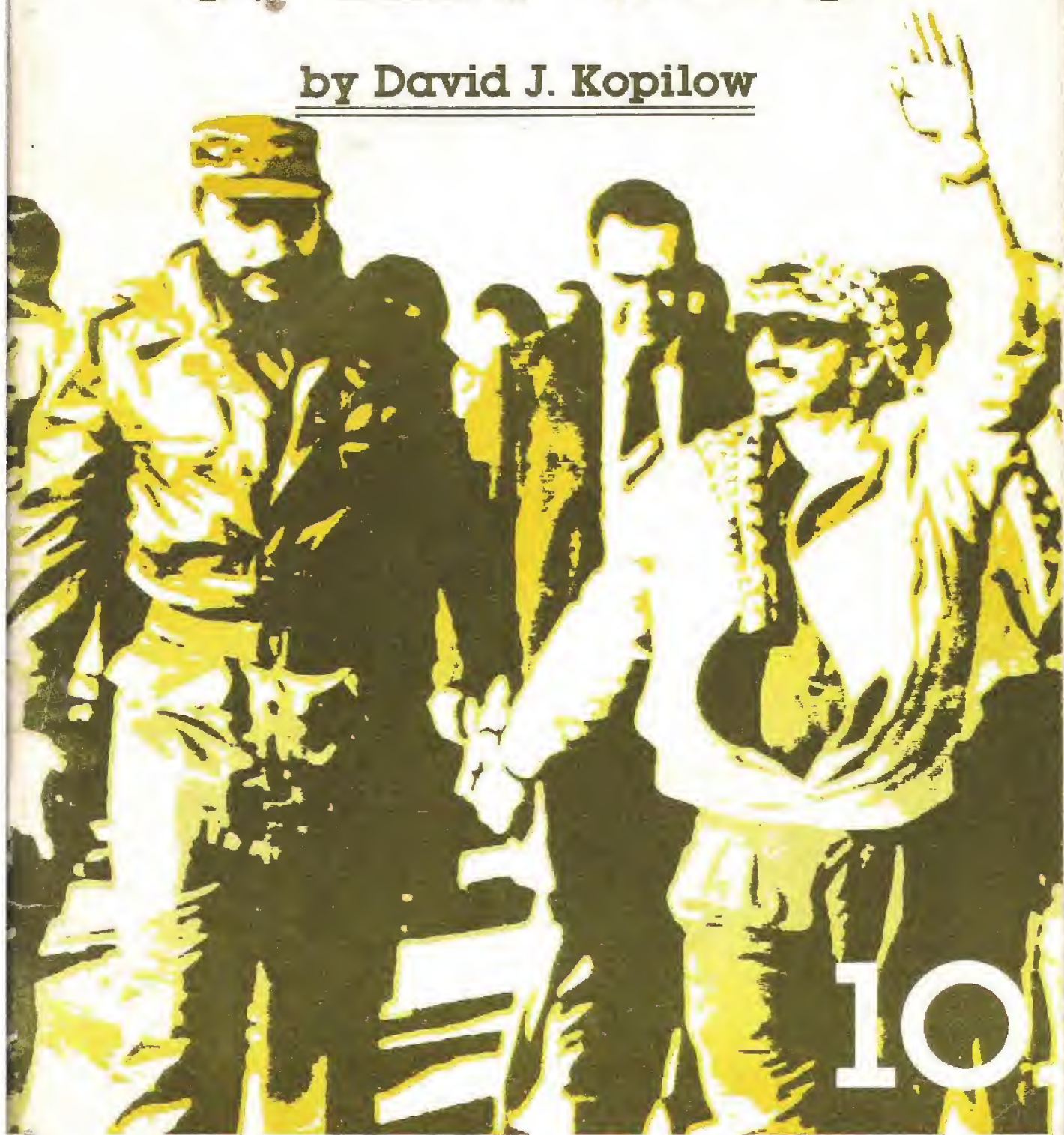
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1984

# Castro, Israel, & the PLO

by David J. Kopilow

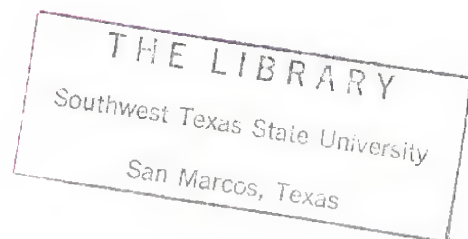


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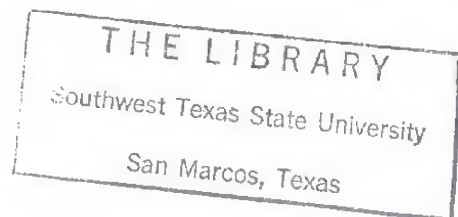
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# Castro, Israel, & the PLO

by David J. Kopilow

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The Cuban-American National Foundation, Inc.  
1984



David J. Kopilow is a former Executive Director of the Youth Institute for Peace in the Middle East and editor of *Crossroads*. For two years he worked in Turkey on behalf of the Asian-American Free Labor Institute, an auxiliary organization of the AFL-CIO. Mr. Kopilow also worked as a consultant for the Hudson Institute in Washington specializing in Central America.

## PREFACE

David Kopilow has rendered us all a considerable service in collating and collecting the information of post-revolutionary Cuba with respect to its policies toward Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. The inverse correlation between Cuban dependence on Soviet economic, military and political assistance and the inability of Castro to fashion a truly national "non-aligned policy" is herein fully and tragically documented.

What makes the case study of Cuba's steady erosion of diplomatic linkages with Israel so painful is the similarities in size, goals and policies (or so it seemed at the time) between these two mini-powers between 1959 and 1973. Israeli-Cuban friendship took place at individual and organizational levels. Jewish intellectuals from North America were in the forefront of singing the praises of Castro. And Cuba resisted efforts by the Soviet bloc and the Arab groups alike to cancel or suspend its diplomatic relationships with Israel.

As Mr. Kopilow documents, Castro's views over time hardened: the Tri-Continental Conference of 1966 introduced partisanship rather than non-participation as the touchstone of Third World behavior. A combination of pressures, from Arab hardliners to shifting Soviet interests in the Middle East led to a devolutionary path tragically without regard to the actual interests of Cuba. Soviet pressures were initially covert and Cuban responses were initially coy. But in a series of moves ranging from Cuban cosponsorship of the U.N. General Assembly resolution condemning "Zionism as Racism" to manifest training and support for PLO efforts, the die of present day Cuban policy was cast — not so much in stone but rather in the trade-aid packages wielded by its Soviet masters.

What are the implications of the Kopilow documentation of Castro's Cuba with respect to Jews? For quite beyond the pedestrian and prosaic concerns by which nations adjust their foreign policies to satisfy the demands of major powers, is the larger consideration of the condition of Jews under totalitarian regimes — be it Hitlerite fascism or Stalinist communism. For the outcome of the Castro revolution, rather than prove an exception only confirmed the rule that the fate of Jews is a dismal one at best under regimes who fail to practice the rudiments of democratic order.

Social science has generated a manifest literature on the Jews under modern capitalism — from big nations like Russia and the United States to small nations like Holland and Italy. In contrast, research done on the Jews under modern communism is much more limited; often the product of brilliant journalists and courageous non-professional observers. Indeed, even the exceptional talents of Jewish writers on post-revolutionary Cuba, often harnessed in support of the Castro regime, reveal a seamier side: the deep, embittered silence of these scholars of Jewish origin when confronted with the burdensome evidence of Castro's unbridled anti-Semitism, coupled with the near total disintegration of the pre-1959 thriving Jewish community of Havana in particular and Cuba in general.

In an essay on "The Jewish Question as Liberal Catharsis" which I wrote in 1969 (cf. *Israeli Ecstasies/Jewish Agonies*) I raised the issue of democratic politics and Judaic pieties as symbiotic ideological linkages. In the light of essays such as Kopilow's, it must now finally and frankly be asked: what has the actual progression of communist regimes in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, no less than Cuba, meant for the demise or diminution of Jewish existence as a visible entity? This must be asked first as an empirical matter, and then examined in terms of inherited sociological paradigms and political positions. Mr. Kopilow has pointed a way that the rest of us studying these matters would ignore at our own peril and at the public's loss.

Irving Louis Horowitz  
Rutgers University  
New Brunswick, New Jersey  
March, 1984

David Kopilow

## CASTRO, ISRAEL AND THE PLO

In April, 1983, four Libyan planes carrying medical supplies to the Sandinista government in Nicaragua were forced to land in Brazil. Acting on a tip, the Brazilian authorities investigated the planes' cargo and found, in addition to the medical supplies, heavy arms, missiles, Czech rifles, a dismantled Soviet training plane and at least five tons of bombs and grenades. Newspaper accounts reported allegations that the arms were in fact bound for El Salvador, by way of Nicaragua, to help the Marxist guerrillas fighting against the government.

Libya apologized for neglecting to tell the Brazilians the full extent of the cargo, and asked for it back. Brazil obliged by arranging for Alitalia, the Italian airline, to transport the arms back to Libya.<sup>1</sup>

The event, duly reported then, is now all but forgotten. Yet Qaddafi's weapons shipment illustrates an important relationship between the Middle East and Central America — more specifically, the network formed by the Palestine Liberation Organization, Libya, other radical Arab states, the Sandinistas, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador and the Cuban government. Fidel Castro has played a major role in forging these links.

This network is not secret or clandestine. One needs no aerial photographs or classified documents to learn of it. Only a willingness to take PLO, Cuban, Sandinista and FMLN guerrilla leaders at their word is necessary, for they have often described their relationships.

The PLO representative in Managua, for example, has boasted of the PLO's role in arranging a crucial \$100 million loan from Libya to economically beleaguered Nicaragua. The Sandinistas are proud that they have fought in the Middle East with the PLO, and boast of the death of Sandinista Patrick Arguello. Arguello was killed in the airplane hijacking which helped spark the events of "Black September" in 1970 when Jordan expelled the PLO.

Fidel Castro has told of his troops fighting in Syria<sup>2</sup> with the PLO. For its part, Cuba benefits from Libyan wealth in the form of loans from Libyan banks.

<sup>1</sup>New York Times, April 25, 1983, page 1.

<sup>2</sup>Granma Weekly Review [Cuba's official newspaper], January 11, 1976, page 5.

Shafik Handal, the leader of the Communist party of El Salvador, one of the five Marxist-Leninist guerrilla groups making up El Salvador's FMLN, has talked of his Palestinian lineage as one more proof of the solidarity of his movement with the PLO. He travels frequently to the Middle East, visiting PLO and other leaders.

Despite many differences, the Cuban regime and the PLO have built strong links which unite them against what they say are their common enemies: Israel and the United States.<sup>3</sup>

In fighting against Israel and the United States, they share training methods and training camps, arrange financing and arms sales, and conduct intense propaganda campaigns designed to gain the interest and sympathy of the world and to distract attention from the apparent contradictions of the PLO participation in Central America and Castro's presence in the Middle East.

This study traces the relationship between Castro's Cuba and the PLO, a relationship which sheds considerable light on the complex issues of Central America and the Middle East.

## I Cuba and the PLO

The relationship between Castro and the PLO is mutually beneficial. Each helps the other — diplomatically, politically and militarily.

Broadly speaking, Fidel Castro has helped the PLO gain prominence in the United Nations and other international arenas, introduced the PLO into Central America, provided direct military support by sending troops to the Middle East, and given training to PLO terrorists.

For its part, the PLO has helped the Castro government gain prominence among Third World nations in the non-aligned movement. It has provided training and direct military support for Cuban allies in Nicaragua and El Salvador, as well as arranged financial assistance.

<sup>3</sup>The PLO Permanent Mission in Havana has written of the PLO's "respect and admiration for revolutionary Cuba, led by Fidel Castro . . . We will follow a road similar to yours until we reach a common path." The quote is from one of the documents captured by the Israeli forces in Lebanon. Raphael Israeli, *PLO in Lebanon: Selected Documents*, London, George Weidenfel and Nicolson Limited, 1983, pages 147-148.

Castro's government has tried to help the PLO gain international recognition as the "sole legitimate representative" of the Palestinian people and to isolate Israel from the rest of the world.

Further, Cuba has closely followed the example of Arab countries in referring to Israel in terms previously reserved for Nazis. To cite just one example, Bruno Rodriguez of Cuba's Union of Young Communists told a gathering at the University of Havana in 1978 that the attitude of the Zionist authorities was similar to Hitler's hordes who massacred millions of European Jews during World War II.<sup>4</sup> The occasion of this speech was the 30th anniversary of the founding of Israel, an event referred to as the "usurpation of Palestinian territory by Zionism to convert it into the state of Israel."<sup>5</sup>

Cuban support of the PLO has been expressed loudly and clearly. "The PLO," wrote Virgilio Calvo in *Juventud Rebelde*, an official Cuban government publication, ". . . has earned its prestige with its successes in politics and on the battlefield, today has the united and militant support of the socialist countries, including Cuba, which consider the Palestinian resistance an inseparable part of the world progressive movements."<sup>6</sup>

"Yasser Arafat is a man," Castro told his First Party Conference in 1975, "whom we deeply love and admire and to whom we have always shown our solidarity."<sup>7</sup>

## The Tri-Continental Conference

"Always" is a bit of an exaggeration perhaps, but the ties between Cuba and the PLO do go back at least to 1966 when Castro hosted the Tri-Continental Conference, which brought together more than 500 delegates from radical leftist groups from around the world to devise a "global revolutionary strategy to counter the global strategy of American imperialism."<sup>8</sup> Decisions were made to emphasize the need for close

<sup>4</sup>*Granma*, May 15, 1978, page 6. [Translations on Latin America, U.S. Joint Publications Research Service, July 3, 1978]

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid*, page 6.

<sup>6</sup>*Juventud Rebelde*, May 14, 1978, page 2.

<sup>7</sup>*Granma Weekly Review*, January 4, 1976, page 10.

<sup>8</sup>Stefan Possony and Francis Bouchev, *International Terrorism — The Communist Connection*, page 47, also Jean-Pierre Vigier in *Le Monde* (Paris), October 27, 1967 as cited in Claire Sterling's *The Terror Network*, page 14.

cooperation between "socialist" countries and "national liberation movements" — which included third world extremist groups, "democratic workers" and "student movements" of Western Europe and North America.

Writing in *The New York Times Magazine*, Claire Sterling, a noted authority on the subject of world terrorism, called the Tri-Continental Conference in Havana an "unmistakable call for a Guerrilla International."<sup>9</sup>

Ten months after the conference a new cluster of more than a dozen guerrilla training camps from all over the world opened in Cuba under the direction of Col. Vadim Kotchergine of the KGB, the Soviet secret police.<sup>10</sup>

### "The Carlos Affair"

One of the most famous graduates of the Cuban camps was Illich Ramirez Sanchez, often called "Carlos the Jackal", who was responsible for much of the success of Palestinian terrorism in Europe.<sup>11</sup>

"The Carlos Affair," as his case became known, was what French Interior Minister André Mousset called "one of the most important cases of international terrorism to come to the attention of any Western police force in recent years."<sup>12</sup>

"Carlos" is a Venezuelan Communist trained by the Soviet Union, Cuba and Palestinian terrorists. His actions, in Mousset's words, "provides categoric proof of the unity of action of the terrorists groups operating in Europe and elsewhere as well as the close links between the terrorist networks and certain foreign intelligence services."<sup>13</sup>

As a young man Illich Ramirez Sanchez (named by his father after Vladimir Illich Lenin) was involved with Venezuelan guerrilla groups, and he attended the Tri-Continental Conference in Havana in 1966. He later returned to Cuba where he trained in one of the camps, studying urban guerrilla tactics, automatic arms, plastic explosives, sabotage, map-making and reading, photography, forgery and disguise. He attended the Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow where he met Mohammed

<sup>9</sup>Claire Sterling, "Terrorism: Tracing the International Network," *New York Times Magazine*, March 1, 1981, page 6.

<sup>10</sup>Claire Sterling, *The Terror Network*, Holt Rinehart and Winston, N.Y., 1981, page 15.

<sup>11</sup>This account of Carlos' life is largely taken from Christopher Dobson and Ronald Payne, *The Carlos Complex*, G.P. Putnam and Sons, N.Y., 1977, and Claire Sterling, *The Terror Network*, Holt Rinehart and Winston, N.Y., 1981.

<sup>12</sup>*New York Times*, July 11, 1975, page 1.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, page 1.

Boudia, the top man for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in Europe. The PFLP is one of the terrorist organizations within the PLO, and the organization with which Carlos was to be most closely associated.

Carlos went to Jordan in 1970 and fought with PLO guerrillas against the Jordanian Army in what became known as the "Black September" operation.

It was so called because King Hussein, angered by the use of Jordan as a base for Palestinian terrorism, ordered an all-out military assault against the PLO and expelled them after heavy fighting during which hundreds of Palestinians died and thousands more fled, some to Israel. Carlos later referred to this battle as a "useful guerrilla experience."

Black September inspired the formation of a new terrorist group known by that name which was responsible for, among other atrocities, the Munich Massacre in which eleven Israeli Olympic athletes were killed.

In any case, after the events of Black September, Carlos returned to Europe where he organized and took part in some of the most spectacular terrorist attacks of the 70s, including the bombing of Le Drugstore in Paris, the Japanese commandos' seizure of the French embassy in The Hague, and the kidnapping of the OPEC oil ministers in 1975, after which he disappeared.

In investigating the murder of two French counterintelligence agents on June 27, 1975 by Carlos, it became quite clear to the French authorities that Cuban diplomats had been intimately involved with Carlos' plans. As reported in a front page story by *The New York Times*, the French Interior Minister told the press that three Cubans had been "constant visitors" to Carlos' Paris hide-out.<sup>14</sup>

France promptly expelled the three Cuban diplomats for aiding and abetting terrorism.

Less than six months later, Carlos, as the top hit man for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, planned and executed the kidnapping of the OPEC oil ministers from Austria. During the OPEC operation he spent hours talking to one of the hostages, Saudi Arabia's oil minister, Sheik Yamani. Carlos ". . . does not believe in the Palestinian cause or in Arab nationalism but . . . [considers] them as factors which might be exploited to help spread the international revolutionary movement."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, page 1.

<sup>15</sup>Christopher Dobson and Ronald Payne, *The Terrorists, Their Weapons, Leaders and Tactics*, Facts on File, New York, 1982, pages 41-42.

After that, Carlos disappeared, reemerging only once to give an interview to the Paris-based weekly, *al-Watan al-Arabi*. In that interview he confirmed many of the stories that had been told about him.

One of the things he left behind, however, was a list of about 500 Jews and others who were slated to be killed. The list included Zionist leader Joseph Edward Sief, who owns the Marks and Spencer clothing chain in England, violinist Yehudi Menuhin, playwright John Osborne and former Prime Minister Edward Heath. Carlos never got past the first name on the list, that of Edward Sief, because he bungled the operation and only wounded Sief instead of killing him.

According to Scotland Yard, "evidence found in apartments in the Bayswater section of London and the Latin Quarter in Paris underline the Venezuelan's links to recent terrorist acts in France, West Germany, the Netherlands and the Middle East."<sup>16</sup> The Cuban Embassy in London was linked to Carlos' activities in England and a Cuban diplomat was recalled.<sup>17</sup>

Carlos was the best-known of the terrorists trained in Cuba, but there were many others. Much the same training has been given to hundreds of Palestinians sent to Cuba during the 1970s, a fact acknowledged by one of Arafat's closest aides, Abu Iyad, in 1978.<sup>18</sup> As Claire Sterling says, "The Palestinians, soon to become a second great magnetic pole for apprentice terrorists, began sending their own apprentices to Cuba in 1966: Cuban instructors have taught in Middle East *feyadeen* camps since the early seventies."<sup>19</sup> "By 1976," *The Chicago Tribune* reported, "the CIA estimated there were 300 Palestinians in Cuban camps."<sup>20</sup>

Among the documents captured by the Israeli armed forces in southern Lebanon in 1982 was a letter written by one of the Palestinians being trained in Cuba to a friend back in Lebanon. The letter, which is printed in the appendix, says, "As for the General Union of Palestinian Students, the Fatah is trying to thwart its activities. The *El-Heriya* (a periodical) reaches us regularly. Why are shelters not being built in Damur? How are the relations with the El Amal Organizations after the recent exchange of fire with them? How is the arming process progressing?"<sup>21</sup>

It is simply the thoughts of one friend to another, but it does provide

<sup>16</sup>Bernard Weinraub, "Elusive Figure Hunted in Europe as Terrorist Key," *The New York Times*, July 14, 1975.

<sup>17</sup>*The Economist*, "Foreign Report," published by *The Economist*, (London) #1526, March 8, 1978 & March 15, 1978.

<sup>18</sup>Reuters, May 30, 1978.

<sup>19</sup>Claire Sterling, op. cit., page 15.

<sup>20</sup>John Maclean, "Cuba sparks Latin terror," *The Chicago Tribune*, June 18, 1981.

<sup>21</sup>Raphael Israeli, op. cit., page 144.

an insight into the factional and military lives of members of the PLO — whether in Lebanon or Cuba.

## Castro's Presence in the Middle East

In addition to training foreign guerrillas in Cuba, Castro has sent troops and advisers to the Middle East: South Yemen, Lebanon and Syria. Soviet-trained Cuban armored forces using Yemen as a base provide the potential for effective military intervention on the Arabian peninsula.<sup>22</sup>

In 1978, *The Economist* published two articles in its "Foreign Report" which detailed the Cuban presence in Syria as beginning just after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. According to this account, the Soviets had promised to help Syria during a war with Israel, and Syria held them to that promise in order to begin the war of attrition that lasted from February until May of 1974. Cuban tank crews fought alongside the Syrians, according to the "Foreign Report," and suffered 180 dead and 250 wounded. In March of the following year the Cubans were flown to Angola.<sup>23</sup> While some analysts doubt that Cubans fought in Syria, few deny they were present.

Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan said in a television interview in the United States on March 31, 1974, that 3,000 Cuban troops were deployed in Syria as part of the Soviet military build-up, but lack of press coverage allowed that issue to fade.<sup>24</sup>

However, Fidel Castro himself confirmed it in a speech at the closing session of the First Congress of the *Partido Socialista Popular* (PSP) [as Cuba's Communist Party was known then] on December 22, 1975, when he said, "... it is no secret to anyone that at any given moment of danger and threat to the Republic of Syria, our men were in Syria."<sup>25</sup>

And again, in 1978, Castro told the Italian weekly *Epoca* that Cuba had sent equipment, doctors and soldiers to aid Syria in its last conflict with Israel.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Edward Luttwak, "Cubans in Arabia? Or, the Meaning of Strategy," *Commentary*, December, 1979, page 64.

<sup>23</sup>"Foreign Report," published by *The Economist*, (London) #1526, March 8, 1978 & March 15, 1978.

<sup>24</sup>*Facts on File Yearbook — 1974, Weekly World News Digest*, Henry H. Schulte, Jr., ed., New York, April 6, 1974, page 257.

<sup>25</sup>*Granma Weekly Review*, January 11, 1976, page 5.

<sup>26</sup>*Epoca*, January 15, 1978, as cited in National Foreign Assessment Center's Cuban Chronology, April, 1980, page 123.

The Cubans were also directly involved with the PLO in Lebanon. In mid-1976, according to *The Economist* "Foreign Report," the Israelis spotted a small group of Cuban officers assigned to prepare the ground in southern Lebanon in advance of a larger force.

From April 19 to May 9, 1978, the newspapers *The Times* (London), the *Al Anba'a* (Kuwait), and the *Rheinischer Merkur* (West Germany) reported that Cuban advisers were at PLO bases in Southern Lebanon following a meeting between PLO leader George Habash and Fidel Castro.<sup>27</sup>

The Cuban presence was further confirmed in 1982 when the Israelis found, in southern Lebanon, such papers as a "*muy secreto*" ("very secret") Cuban training manual detailing how to conduct military operations, including blowing-up high-power electric transformers and railway stations.<sup>28</sup>

Arafat has acknowledged Castro's longstanding support. In remarks during a visit to Cuba following his address to the U.N. General Assembly in November, 1974 Arafat expressed his thanks to "the people of Cuba, their revolutionary leadership, and the Communist Party of Cuba [who] have made us feel that we form part of one long worldwide struggle . . . we are not alone in our struggle against Zionism. . . Comrade Fidel said that the Palestinian Revolution can count on the full support and aid of the Cuban Revolution."<sup>29</sup> In an interview in the August 23, 1981, *Granma*, the official Cuban government newspaper, Arafat thanked "Cuba, the Cuban leadership, the Cuban people, the Communist Party and government, especially dear Comrade Fidel Castro, who supports us. . . They are all on the side of all just causes, with the cause of the Palestinian people at the top of the list."<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the training and direct military support, Castro helped introduce the PLO into Angola. The PLO has operated for many years in Africa and in Central America, where it has been able to recruit and train guerrillas and find a market for arms. Castro's cooperation added impetus to the PLO campaign to promote anti-Israeli postures by many governments.

Within this context a March 6, 1978, communique issued by Cuba, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) wing of the

<sup>27</sup>*Weekly Media Abstract*, Focal Points Report No. 79, published by Media Analysis Center, Jerusalem, February 22, 1980, page 6.

<sup>28</sup>Raphael Israeli, op. cit., pages 158-167.

<sup>29</sup>*Granma Weekly Review*, November 24, 1974, page 3.

<sup>30</sup>Cited in ADL [Anti-Defamation League] *International Report*, "PLO Activities in Latin America," May, 1982, page 13.

PLO, and the Sandinistas can be seen. Signed in Havana, it declared war against "Yankee imperialism, the racist regime of Israel and the dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza . . ." <sup>31</sup> Of the five Latin American countries that have allowed PLO offices to open, only Cuba and Nicaragua have granted the PLO full diplomatic status.

The links between those groups go back many years.

In August of 1979, Jorge Mandi, a Sandinista spokesman, told the Kuwaiti newspaper *Al Watan*,

"There is a long standing blood unity between us and the Palestinian revolution. . . Many of the units belonging to the Sandinista movement were at Palestinian revolutionary bases in Jordan. In the early 1970s, Nicaraguan and Palestinian blood was spilled together in Amman and in other places during the "Black September battles."

He continued,

"A number of Sandinistas took part in the operations to divert four aircraft which the PFLP seized and landed at a desert airfield in Jordan. One of our comrades was also wounded in another hijack operation in which Leila Khaled was involved. She was in command of the operation and our comrades helped her carry it out. It is natural, therefore, that in our war against Somoza we received Palestinian aid for our revolution in various forms. . ." <sup>32</sup>

The Nicaraguan referred to as being wounded, but who actually died, was Patrick Arguello.

The hijackings were an ambitious and spectacular undertaking. Two planes were hijacked over Europe and flown to Dawson's field in Jordan and a third taken to Cairo and destroyed. A fourth plane, an El Al Boeing 707, escaped when Israeli sky marshals shot and killed Arguello and captured the infamous terrorist Leila Khaled. A fifth plane was later hijacked and flown to Dawson's field to provide hostages as bargaining chips in negotiations for Khaled's release. The hostages were later released in exchange for terrorists imprisoned in Switzerland, the United Kingdom and West Germany.

It was this incident which provoked King Hussein to drive the PLO out of Jordan but which gained the PLO enormous recognition throughout the world.

<sup>31</sup>Cited in *ADL International Report*, op. cit., page 9.

<sup>32</sup>*Al Watan*, Aug. 7, 1979, as cited in "*ADL International Report*," page 9.

As Jorge Mandi stated, the PLO reciprocated aid from the Sandinistas in the early 1970s when it sent help to the Sandinistas several years later.

## The PLO in Central America

In July, 1979, a PLO-chartered aircraft ostensibly carrying relief and medical supplies between Beirut and Costa Rica for Nicaraguan war refugees was found, during a stopover in Tunis, to have 50 tons of arms on board, including an anti-aircraft gun. The Tunisian government did not allow that particular shipment to go through, and ordered the plane unloaded.<sup>33</sup>

The heartfelt thanks of the Sandinistas to the PLO suggests that other aid did manage to get to Nicaragua.

"We say to our brother Arafat," said Nicaraguan Interior Minister Tomas Borge on the First Anniversary ceremony after the Sandinista takeover, "that Nicaragua is his land and that the PLO cause is the cause of the Sandinistas." Tel Aviv is consistently listed after Washington in condemnations issued by Central American revolutionary groups.<sup>34</sup>

Arafat attended ceremonies in Managua, as did Fidel Castro and members of the Unified Revolutionary Directorate of the Salvadoran guerrillas. It was subsequently reported in *The Washington Post* that they were planning major arms shipments to El Salvador.<sup>35</sup>

In response to Borge's statement, Arafat replied, "The links between us are not new. Your comrades did not come to our country just to train, but also to fight. Your enemies are our enemies."<sup>36</sup>

Arafat boasted to the Palestine National Council in April, 1981,<sup>37</sup> of his international "connections" with all revolutionary movements around the world, including El Salvador and Nicaragua. To western newsmen he said, "we have connections with all revolutionary movements throughout the world, in El Salvador, in Nicaragua — and I reiterate El Salvador. . ."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup>*The Washington Post*, May 29, 1982, page 12.

<sup>34</sup>Constantine Menges, "Central America and Its Enemies," *Commentary*, August, 1981, page 33.

<sup>35</sup>*The Washington Post*, May 29, 1982, page 12.

<sup>36</sup>"The PLO and International Terror," the IDF [Israeli Defense Forces] *Spokesman*, March, 1981.

<sup>37</sup>*Facts on File Yearbook, Weekly World News Digest*, Stephen Orolofsky, Managing Editor, New York, April 24, 1981, page 268.

<sup>38</sup>Associated Press, April 14, 1981.

As previously noted, the link between Marxist-Leninist guerrillas in El Salvador and the PLO was forged by Fidel Castro when Castro introduced the PLO and Central American guerrillas at the Tri-Continental Conference in 1966, and it has been reinforced by an ethnic affinity of a sector of the Arab community in El Salvador. The head of the Moscow-oriented Communist party in El Salvador, Shafik Handal is of Arab origin — his father apparently emigrated from Bethlehem to El Salvador in 1921.<sup>39</sup>

Handal's party is one of the five Marxist-Leninist organizations of the FMLN which has been trying to seize power in El Salvador. Handal has visited Lebanon several times at the invitation of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and other PLO groups.

After one of his trips Handal told a *Wall Street Journal* reporter: "I wouldn't be revealing a secret if I say there are some in our revolutionary cadre who are Arabs."<sup>40</sup> Beirut sources within the PLO confirmed to the *Journal* that Handal's relations with the PLO were more than a decade old. Another Salvadoran guerrilla who had ties with the PLO was Cayetano Carpio, who visited Lebanon several times. During a ten-day visit in March, 1982, the *New York Times* carried a photo of Carpio with Palestinian terrorists.

Yasser Arafat confirmed in January, 1982, that the PLO had provided military assistance to both Nicaragua and Salvadoran guerrillas by sending pilots to Nicaragua and guerrillas to El Salvador.<sup>41</sup>

"We will not hesitate to send arms and people," said a PLO spokesman, "since our policy is to help revolutionary movements everywhere to the extent possible."<sup>42</sup>

According to a *Washington Post* account, written by Christopher Dickey, the PLO representative in Managua said "What Commander Arafat means is that we do indeed aid our friends in this aspect . . . if Commander Arafat said that we have pilots and even combatants that means it's true."<sup>43</sup>

When asked about how many combatants the PLO had sent, George Salameh, the PLO representative in Managua, said, "there is not the

<sup>39</sup>*The Wall Street Journal*, January 14, 1982, page 4.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, page 4.

<sup>41</sup>This statement was made to Beirut's *As Safir* as cited by Christopher Dickey in *The Washington Post*, May 29, 1982, page 12.

<sup>42</sup>*The Washington Post*, May 29, 1982, page 12.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, page 12.

slightest possibility of mentioning figures," but suggested they were low. "The number doesn't count," he said. "It's the fact in itself. A small thing is sometimes more significant."<sup>44</sup>

Money is also significant, and the PLO has been able to make some money available to Nicaragua. In 1981, the PLO arranged a \$100 million loan from Libya for the floundering Nicaraguan economy. "We were helpful with the loan from Libya," Salameh told *The Washington Post*, which reported that the PLO itself is said to have contributed between \$10 and \$12 million to the Sandinistas directly.<sup>45</sup>

It is also possible that the PLO was similarly helpful as a broker in the loans of at least \$50 million made by Libya to Cuba. Although not an enormous amount of money, it is significant to Cuba since its large foreign debt and weak economy have made Western banks wary of loaning more money to Havana.<sup>46</sup>

## The Conference of Non-Aligned Nations

One of the ways the PLO has been useful to Castro has been its help in securing influence in the movement of non-aligned nations.

Prior to 1973, Castro had never attended a conference of the group, but when he attended the Fourth Summit of the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in Algiers, he was at first challenged and then embraced by Libya's Moammar Qaddafi. At the following conference Castro was selected as its next head, despite the fact that as a Soviet surrogate Cuba was hardly qualified to be a member of an organization which has as its stated purpose the building of a group of nations independent from either superpower.

Castro's prominence has been attributed to the support of several radical Arab states which were influenced by the leaders of the PLO.

## II

### Cuba and Israel

The deterioration of Cuba's relations with Israel parallels the development of its close ties with the PLO.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, page 12.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, page 12.

<sup>46</sup>Betancourt, Ernesto and Dizard, Wilson, *Castro and the Bankers*, Cuban American National Foundation, 1982, passim. Also Clyde Farnsworth, "Cuba Said to Reschedule Almost Half of Its Debt," *International Herald Tribune*, December 27, 1983, pages 5-6.

In the early days of Cuban-PLO cooperation, from 1966 until 1973, Cuba maintained diplomatic ties with Israel. In fact, Israel and Castro's Cuba established diplomatic relations and exchanged emissaries at the legation level almost immediately after Castro's takeover in 1959.

To be sure, relations between the two were on a fairly low level and were marked with little fanfare. But Israel was eager to cultivate good relations with nations which would later be called Third World, many of which were eager to take advantage of Israel's highly regarded expertise in agriculture and irrigation methods. An Israel-Cuba Friendship Society was set up in Israel in 1964 through which the kibbutz movement sent agricultural experts to Cuba. Those experts — about 20 of them altogether — instructed the Cubans on new irrigation techniques and new agricultural methods.<sup>47</sup>

I. Silber, a former classmate of Castro's and an ex-leader of the Cuban branch of the Zionist socialist youth movement, the Hashomer Hatzair, left Cuba in 1949 for Israel. But he kept in contact with Carlos Rafael Rodriguez,<sup>48</sup> a member of the Executive Bureau of the PSP. At one point Silber wrote to Rodriguez about the possibility of setting up a Cuban counterpart to the Israel-Cuba Friendship Society, and Rodriguez reportedly received the idea warmly.<sup>49</sup>

## The Cuban Jewish Community

The years following the 1959 overthrow of dictator Fulgencio Batista were years when the early promises of liberalization and democratization dwindled as revolutionary Cuba was gradually turned into a totalitarian society. Restrictions increasingly squeezed trade unions, newspapers, universities and religious institutions. The labor movement, the media, and the universities became instruments of the state. Religious institutions, severely restricted, chose to be silent about the repressive climate in order to survive. The Jewish community, having suffered similar conditions elsewhere, was particularly concerned.

<sup>47</sup>Yoram Shapira, "Cuba and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *Cuba in the World* edited by Cole Blasier & Carmelo Mesa-Largo, University of Pittsburgh Press, page 154. Also, Edy Kaufman, "Israel's Foreign Policy Implementation in Latin America," in *Israel in the Third World*, edited by Michael Curtis and Susan Aurelia Gitelson, Transaction Books, N.J., 1976, page 145.

<sup>48</sup>Ironically Rodriguez had been Batista's minister without portfolio during the 1940s.

<sup>49</sup>Yoram Shapira, *op. cit.*, page 153.

Although Cuba had never had a large Jewish community, there were between ten and twelve thousand Jews in Cuba when Batista fell.<sup>50</sup> Most of them were Polish Jews who had settled in Havana in the 1920s after being refused entry into the United States. A smaller group of Spanish-speaking Sephardic Jews from the Balkans and Palestine had settled in Cuba before World War I.<sup>51</sup>

Throughout the 1960s most of the Cuban Jews, many of them merchants and manufacturers of consumer goods such as shoes and clothing, left Cuba; by 1967 the Jewish population was around 2,000 and by 1977 it was estimated to be about 1,500.<sup>52</sup> Today it numbers less than 1,000.

Thousands of Cubans left their country during the early years of the revolution, and some scholars view the Jewish exodus from Cuba as part of the general flight of the middle class after Castro's takeover rather than as a result of special persecution against Jews. They note, in fact, that the Jewish community was allowed more latitude than other minorities.

A kosher restaurant was allowed to operate with adequate allotments of supplies, and synagogues were permitted to receive and distribute matzoh and other ceremonial foods as well as Israeli wine during Passover.

A Jewish social center known as the *Patronato de la Comunidad Hebrea*, located in the district of Vedado in Havana, was permitted to remain open, and a long-established Zionist association continued to meet occasionally.

The Albert Einstein School, a Jewish day school, was expropriated and transformed into a public school after the revolution, but two of the classrooms were set aside for Jewish students in the late afternoon and the children were provided with transportation.

Weekly half-hour radio talks were given in Yiddish on the state-run radio, the only foreign language broadcast permitted despite the presence of sizeable Russian and Chinese communities in Cuba.<sup>53</sup>

Castro's initial treatment of the Jewish community in Cuba seemed to reinforce a view prevalent in some circles that he had friendly feelings towards Jews and the Jewish state. Several theories have been proposed to explain the relative tolerance Castro initially granted the Jewish com-

munity, given the harsh methods he was using to suppress dissent and to establish a totalitarian state.

He may have had his eye on public opinion in Western democracies which, since World War II and the Holocaust, has often regarded a country's treatment of its Jewish community as an indicator of its tolerance and level of civilization. If indeed Castro was attempting a degree of independence from the Soviet Union, affected or otherwise, he would have known that his benign treatment of Cuban Jews would compare well with the persecution of Jews in the Soviet Union.

Or Castro may simply have seen that tolerance of Cuban Jews would be a way to woo a segment of the liberal Jewish community in the United States into supporting Cuba, which he was attempting to portray as a liberal's dream of a progressive revolution.

Castro classified Cuban Jews leaving Cuba as *repatriados*, or repatriated, rather than being branded as *gusanos*, or worms, as other emigrants were called.

And although Cubans seeking to emigrate had their homes, furniture, appliances and savings accounts confiscated by the regime, and were subjected to many indignities, as "repatriados," Cuba's Jews were permitted to remove their personal property and valuables, and the Cuban national airline flew several hundred emigrants to Israel in several flights at no charge.<sup>54</sup>

Foreshadowing later developments, this limited recognition of Israel was sometimes an embarrassment for Castro. When Israeli President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi died in late April, 1963, an official 3-day mourning period was declared and official flags were flown at half-mast. Although this was standard official procedure with little real significance and followed whenever a head of state of a country with which Cuba had relations died, it was enough to anger Castro's Arab friends. According to one account, Algeria's Ben Bella cancelled an invitation to Castro on the strength of this action.<sup>55</sup>

## The Break with Israel

At any rate, the early policy of limited recognition of Israel changed. At the 1966 Tri-Continental Conference of Communist and leftist organizations held in Havana, the beginning of a shift occurred. The resolution passed by the conference called for the breaking of all treaties

<sup>50</sup>Maurice Halperin, *The Taming of Fidel Castro*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1981, page 238.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, page 238.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, page 255.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, pages 238-240.

<sup>54</sup>Yoram Shapira, *op. cit.*, page 138.

<sup>55</sup>Maurice Halperin, *op. cit.*, page 242.

with Israel, the total economic and cultural ostracism of Israel, and expulsion of Israel from all international organizations. Foreshadowing the language which would be adopted years later by the United Nations, the resolution denounced Zionism as "an imperialistic movement by nature" whose methods are "racist and fascist."<sup>56</sup>

Cuba voted for the resolution, but did not immediately enforce its dictates. According to one account, Castro told an Israeli diplomat that he did not consider Cuba bound by the resolution because the conference was of parties and organizations, not of states.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, the written proceedings of the conference distributed by Cuba omitted the text of the anti-Israel resolution,<sup>58</sup> giving some credence to that statement.

In 1967, after the Six-Day War, Cuba condemned Israel for the first time at the United Nations. Cuba's permanent ambassador Ricardo Alarcon called the war an "armed aggression against the Arab peoples. . . by a most treacherous. . . surprise attack in the Nazi manner."<sup>59</sup>

Alarcon went on to say that Cuba "opposed every manifestation of religious national or racial prejudice . . . This principle is applicable to the Palestine people . . . as well as the Jewish people, which for 2,000 years has suffered racial prejudice and persecution."<sup>60</sup>

This latter statement was irritating to the Arab countries which had welcomed Cuba's attack on Israel; references to the persecution of Jews seemed to grant a legitimacy to Jewish national aspirations.

Castro continued to maintain some policy differences on Israel with the Arab states. In late 1967, Castro told K.S. Karol in an interview printed in the Paris *Nouvel Observateur* that he disagreed with the Arab call for the extermination of Israel. "True revolutionaries never threaten to exterminate a whole country," he was quoted as saying.<sup>61</sup>

A few months earlier, he apparently had rebuffed a request to break relations with Israel by Alexei Kosygin, who had flown to Havana after meeting with President Lyndon B. Johnson at Glassboro, N.J. According to one account, Castro was angry that the Soviet Union had begun a dialogue with the United States and, when Kosygin asked him to sever

relations with Israel, Castro reportedly replied that he would do so only after Moscow broke relations with the United States.<sup>62</sup>

At the August, 1967, conference of the Organization of Latin American Solidarity in Havana, Cuba was subjected to attacks from pro-Moscow Latin American Communist parties for its refusal to break relations with Israel. Castro replied: "Neither did our country break off relations with Albania when a great number of countries from the socialist camp did."<sup>63</sup>

Things remained in this precarious balance for the next few years, until the 1973 Fourth Conference of Non-Aligned Nations. Although begun some years before as a forum for those countries not aligned with either the Soviet Union or the United States, the group of non-aligned nations had been subjected to a vigorous and effective campaign by the Soviet Union to dominate it.

The 1973 conference, held in Algiers, was site to a major battle over the question of Soviet influence. The People's Republic of China, until 1959 strongly allied with the Soviet Union, had recently propounded its "two imperialisms" theory. The "imperialism" of the United States was accepted by many at these gatherings, but China was saying that Soviet imperialism also posed a danger to non-aligned nations.

The PRC's denunciation of the Soviet Union was taken extremely seriously by the USSR, which acted quickly to oppose it.

Before the conference opened, Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev sent an open message to the chairman of the conference, Algerian President Houari Boumediene, "politely but firmly warning against adopting the Chinese view."<sup>64</sup>

Castro, who had never before attended a conference of the non-aligned nations, spoke for half an hour on the subject — possibly one of his shortest speeches. He spoke in uncompromising terms on the "glorious, heroic and extraordinary services rendered to the human race by the Soviet people."<sup>65</sup> He condemned the idea of two imperialisms as having been "encouraged by leaders of non-aligned countries" who had "betrayed the cause of internationalism from supposedly revolutionary positions."<sup>66</sup>

<sup>56</sup>Yoram Shapira, *op. cit.*, page 155.

<sup>57</sup>Maurice Halperin, *op. cit.*, page 246.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, page 247.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, page 246.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, page 246.

<sup>61</sup>K.S. Karol, *Nouvel Observateur*, cited in Maurice Halperin, *The Taming of Fidel*

<sup>62</sup>Maurice Halperin, *op. cit.*, page 247.

<sup>63</sup>*Latin American Radicalism*, edited by Irving Louis Horowitz, Jose de Castro, and John Garazzi, Vintage Books, N.Y., 1969, page 565.

<sup>64</sup>*Le Monde*, Sept. 10, 1973, page 1.

<sup>65</sup>Maurice Halperin, *op. cit.*, page 247.

<sup>66</sup>Carmelo Mesa Lago, *Cuba in the 1970s*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1978, page 22.

This role as a pro-Soviet spokesman was far from being new for Castro, who had been a strong supporter of the Soviet Union for years. This time, however, he was publicly called to task for being a Soviet representative by none other than Libya's Moammar Qaddafi, who a few months later aligned himself closely with the Soviet Union.

"We are against Cuba's presence in this conference of non-aligned nations," Qaddafi said in open session. "There is no difference between Cuba and any Eastern European country, or for that matter Uzbekistan and the Soviet Union itself."<sup>67</sup>

For two days after this assault, frantic efforts were made to patch up the Libyan-Cuban split which threatened to prevent orderly adjournment of the conference. Finally, an hour before the scheduled ending, Castro announced that Arab arguments had convinced him to sever relations with Israel. Whereupon, according to an eyewitness, Qaddafi rushed over and embraced Castro.<sup>68</sup> According to a report in the official Cuban newspaper *Granma*, PLO leader Yasser Arafat also embraced Castro.<sup>69</sup>

The severance of relations with Israel was so sudden that both the Israeli Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem and the Cuban minister in Israel were caught off guard, as was the Cuban Foreign Ministry.<sup>70</sup>

The *Jerusalem Post* headlined its story, "Cuban Move a Surprise," and used an Associated Press dispatch which quoted 86-year-old Ricardo Subirana y Lobo (Cuba's Minister to Israel) as saying, "Prime Minister Fidel Castro has never before taken the initiative in severing ties. Israel had little political contact with Cuba but commercial links were good."<sup>71</sup>

As sudden as it was, the break was complete. Castro and the Cuban government have been unrelentingly hostile to Israel since the conference, never again displaying signs of ambivalence.

*Granma's* reaction to the combined Arab attack on Israel during the 1973 war was to run a full page of pictures entitled, "Zionist Barbarism in

<sup>67</sup>George Volsky, "Cuba 15 Years Later," *Current History*, 1974, page 13.

<sup>68</sup>*Le Monde*, September 11, 1973, page 5.

<sup>69</sup>*Granma Weekly Review*, September 16, 1973, page 6.

<sup>70</sup>*Ma'ariv*, September 10, 1973, as quoted in Yoram Shapira, "External and Internal Influences in Latin American-Israeli Relations," Michael Curtis and Susan Gitelson, *op. cit.*, page 153.

<sup>71</sup>*Jerusalem Post*, September 10, 1973, page 1.

# Granma

Havana, November 24, 1974

Year 9 / Number 47

## WELCOMED AT AIRPORT BY COMMANDER IN CHIEF FIDEL CASTRO



● YASSER ARAFAT, leader of the Palestinian Resistance, arrived in Cuba on November 14, satisfying his desire to visit our country. His visit is in response to an invitation by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro, Prime Minister of the Revolutionary Government and First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba.

Arafat was wearing a brown uniform and the traditional turban. Fidel accompanied him as he greeted Party and Government leaders and members of the Diplomatic Corps.

Fidel and Arafat embraced at the foot of the airliner's ramp. This is the second meeting between Fidel and Arafat. The first was a little over a year ago, at the 4th Summit Conference of Non-Aligned Countries. Afterward the guerrilla leader said that the encounter had marked the crowning point in the ties of friendship which existed between Cuba and the Palestinian revolutionary movement.

Also present to welcome the Palestinian leader were Blas Roca, Pedro Mirat, Isidoro Maimierca and Raúl García Peláez, members of the Secretariat of the Party; Raúl Roa, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Flavio Bravo, Belarmino Castilla and Joel Domenech, Deputy Prime Ministers and members of the Central Committee; Jesús Montané and Osmany Cienfuegos, First Commanders (Colonels) José Abantes and Calisto García; José A. Naranjo, Secundino Guerra, Alfonso Zayas, Basilio Rodríguez and Manuel Díaz González, all members of the Central Committee; Nora Frómata, Minister of Light Industry; José A. Gutiérrez Muñiz, Minister of Public Health; Pedro Gueimes, Minister of Communications; Serafín Fernández, Minister of Domestic Trade; and Armando Torres, Minister of Justice; Party and Foreign Ministry officials and leaders of the mass organizations.

As the Algerian Airlines plane touched down at 8:40 a.m. at José Martí International Airport the people on the terrace cheered Palestine and Arafat. Shortly afterward, the President of the Palestine Liberation Organization and head of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of the sister nation appeared at the door.

Diplomatic Corps was represented by Marley A. "regé d'Affai" "R. Am"

Arafat's visit to Cuba in November, 1974, received extraordinary coverage by the Cuban media. *Granma*, the official organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, dedicated three-quarters of its weekly edition to the visit. Arafat was given Cuba's foremost decoration, the Playa Giron [Bay of Pigs] medal.



Bohemia No. 39/Septiembre/24/1982 (Havana)

1982



Bohemia No. 23/Junio 10/1983 (Havana)

The pejorative treatment of Israel is a constant element in Castro's controlled press. Cuban political cartoons often portrayed former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin as a dog wearing a collar with a swastika.

1983



Bohemia No. 23/Junio 10/1983 (Havana)

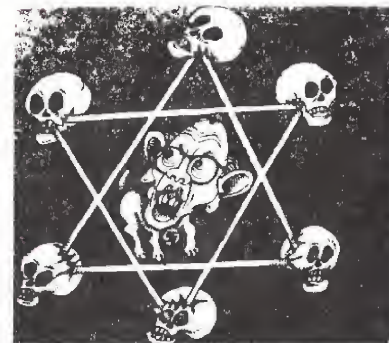


Bohemia No. 9/Marzo 4/1983 (Havana)



Bohemia No. 9/Marzo 4/1983 (Havana)

The image of a blood-thirsty Israel, wearing Nazi swastikas and surrounded by skulls is often repeated in Cuba's newspapers.



Bohemia No. 40/Octubre/1/1983 (Havana)



BEY031701-3/17/82 — BEIRUT: Salvadoran guerrilla chief Cayetano Carpio of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front talks with Palestinian fighters outside the Beaufort Castle in Southern Lebanon 3/12. Cayetano Carpio was in Lebanon on a secret visit to the Palestine Liberation Organization. (UPI) c/sr. Tareq Ibrahim

Syria,<sup>72</sup> and Cuba's reaction to Israel's rescue of hijacked hostages at Entebbe Airport was to call it a criminal violation of Uganda's sovereignty consistent with Israel's racist policies.<sup>73</sup>

The landmark of Cuban hostility to Israel, however, was its co-sponsorship of the "Zionism is Racism" resolution adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1975. The Cuban position was expressed by the *Granma Weekly Review*, Cuba's English language weekly distributed abroad, which said the resolution "left no doubt about the identical imperialist origins and racist structure of the Israeli Zionist regime that is occupying Palestine and the one that is exploiting the black masses and South Africa."<sup>74</sup>

The Castro government was one of only three non-Arab governments to sponsor the resolution declaring "Zionism is Racism" and, in May, 1977, Cuba was the only non-Arab country in the UN Economic and Social Council to demand that the resolution be included on the agenda of a UN-sponsored world conference on racism.<sup>75</sup>

Ever since 1973, Cuban government magazines and newspapers have adopted the Soviet formula of ignoring the Jewish identity of victims of Nazi genocide. A full-page, illustrated account of a visit to Auschwitz in *Granma*, for example, never mentions Jews. The article says, "between July 14, 1940, and January 27, 1945, more than four million persons died in Auschwitz. . . Confined in this vast prison were people of different nationalities, different languages, different customs and different ideas."<sup>76</sup> At the very least it is of historical interest to note that most victims at Auschwitz were Jews.

In 1979, Castro accused Israel of practicing genocide against the Palestinian people similar to the "genocide that the Nazis once visited on the Jews."<sup>77</sup>

The pejorative treatment of Israel is a constant element in Castro's controlled press. Cuban political cartoons often portrayed former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin as a dog, wearing a collar with a swastika. In some cases the Star of David is shown surrounding the Nazi symbol. Recent issues of a widely circulated magazine published in Havana, *Bohemia*, (March 4, June 10, 1983 and Sept. 24, Oct. 1, 1982

<sup>72</sup>*Granma*, October 20, 1973, page 8.

<sup>73</sup>Maurice Halperin, *op cit.*, page 257.

<sup>74</sup>*Granma Weekly Review*, January 18, 1976.

<sup>75</sup>Harris O. Schoenberg, "Betrayal of an Ideal; Cuba's Campaign Against Israel," *B'nai B'rith International Council*, May, 1977, page 5.

<sup>76</sup>*Granma Weekly Review*, March 2, 1980, page 12.

<sup>77</sup>*Granma Weekly Review*, October 21, 1979, page 2.

among others) contain cartoons depicting both President Reagan and Menachem Begin. In one, the U.S. President, wearing a cowboy hat with swastika on it, is shown pulling a dog on a leash with the face of Begin, dripping blood. In another issue, Adolf Hitler, Ronald Reagan and Menachem Begin are shown in the classic "hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil" pose.

The image of a blood-thirsty Israel, wearing Nazi swastikas and surrounded by skulls is a repeated one in Fidel Castro's newspapers.

The official hatred of all things Israeli has had an effect on the Cuban Jewish community. By 1977, the biggest synagogue in Havana — the Patronato — was down to only 200 members, and was in severe disrepair.<sup>78</sup> The kosher restaurant was closed because of "labor troubles" and the daily Hebrew classes for children were reduced to once a week taught by a non-Jewish teacher from Spain. The Havana office of the PLO is now located in the same building which houses the Cuban Zionist Center.<sup>79</sup>

It is difficult to avoid drawing the conclusion that the official anti-Zionist stand of the government on international questions has translated into a callousness and hostility towards the Cuban-Jewish community that can be called anti-Semitic.<sup>80</sup>

This anti-Semitism is not unique in communist countries, and is encouraged by the PLO, which has repeatedly sought Jewish targets to express its hostility to Israel.

### Sandinista Anti-Semitism in Nicaragua

The experience of the Cuban Jews is analogous to that of the Nicaraguan Jews. When the Sandinistas overthrew Anastasio Somoza, the small Jewish community came under attack. Land was confiscated and virtually all of the estimated 50 to 200 Jews in Nicaragua fled the country. The president of the Jewish community, Abraham Gorn, was accused of stealing land and arrested. As punishment, the 70-year-old man was forced to sweep streets for two weeks until, under international pressure, he was declared innocent by a Nicaraguan court and released.

Although there are few, if any, Jews remaining in Nicaragua, the newspapers still run anti-Semitic articles. For example *Nuevo Diario*, a

<sup>78</sup>*New York Times*, December 12, 1977, page 12.

<sup>79</sup>Yoram Shapira, *op. cit.*, page 159.

<sup>80</sup>Frank Calzon, "Jews in Cuba: Clues Indicate Minority Having a Tough Time with Castro and His Policies," *The Miami Herald*, January 23, 1977.

Managua newspaper friendly to the government, in July 1982, denounced Jews "who crucified Jesus Christ and . . . used the myth of God's chosen people to massacre the Palestinian people without mercy."<sup>81</sup>

*The Miami Herald* quoted one exile, Isaac Stavisky, as saying, "The Sandinistas waged a systematic campaign against the Jews."<sup>82</sup>

And yet, the Nicaraguan government insists it is not anti-Semitic. At a meeting with U.S. intellectuals, Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Miguel d'Escoto said, "We have broken our relations with Israel, but we go out of our way to show our love and respect for the Jewish people."<sup>83</sup>

The expropriation of property owned by Jews, including the only synagogue in Managua, and the exile of the Nicaraguan Jewish community would seem to indicate otherwise.

### III

### Cuba, the PLO and the Soviet Union

Experts disagree about when Fidel Castro's goals became inextricably linked with those of the Soviet Union. Some argue that it was before the 1959 revolution, others contend it was in 1969, when — apparently in response to delays in the shipment of Soviet oil — Cuba announced its support of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.<sup>84</sup>

Still others believe it was not until 1973, when Cuba accepted a fresh Soviet aid package. Castro announced the new aid on Cuban radio in January, 1973. The package included a seven-year contract under which the Soviet Union would buy Cuban sugar at more than the world price, reschedule the Cuban debt to the Soviet Union with deferral of payment until 1986, and accept a 25-year repayment plan for all the loans at no interest.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>81</sup>"Nicaragua Without Jews," Morton M. Rosenthal, Director of the Latin American Affairs Department of the Anti-Defamation League, 1983.

<sup>82</sup>"Nicaraguan Jews feel sting of ouster," *The Miami Herald*, July 2, 1983, page 16A.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, page 16A.

<sup>84</sup>This point of view is argued by G.D. Ra'anani in "The Evolution of the Soviet Use of Surrogates in Military Relations with the Third World," published by the Rand Corporation in December 1979.

<sup>85</sup>*The New York Times*, January 4, 1973, page 10.

Though the total debt of Cuba to the Soviet Union has never been officially revealed, many observers say the 1973 aid plan put the total at about \$4 billion.

From that date on, Castro dropped all pretense of independent foreign policy. Cuban "volunteers" became the foreign legion of the Soviet Union. By 1976 Cuba had sent troops to at least ten countries including Angola, Somalia and South Yemen to serve Soviet interests.<sup>86</sup>

This was a new role for Cuba. During the 1960s, Cuba had supported guerrilla movements in many countries — notably Bolivia, where Che Guevara's attempt at organizing a Cuban-style guerrilla insurrection failed — but those commitments had never been formally tied to the role and purpose of the official Cuban armed forces.

In 1975 Fidel Castro made proof of overseas "international solidarity" a criterion for membership in the Communist Party.<sup>87</sup>

From the Soviet perspective, the use of Cuban troops was an easy way to establish a military presence without having to take direct responsibility for intervening in other countries.

Also, the Cubans were much less personally abrasive than Russian advisers, considered by many to be racist, when they were sent to black African nations such as Angola.

One Angolan explained: "the Soviets . . . usually demand rooms in the best hotels, with air conditioning and new stoves and refrigerators, which cost us a lot of our precious foreign exchange, whereas we can put five or six Cubans in a hot one-bedroom apartment with mattresses on the floor and we will never hear a complaint."<sup>88</sup>

Castro couldn't have made his relationship with the Soviet Union any clearer than when he said in his main report to the First Party Congress in December, 1975, "the starting point of Cuba's foreign policy, according to our Programmatic Platform is the subordination of Cuban positions to the international needs of the struggle for socialism and for the national liberation of peoples."<sup>89</sup>

That "struggle for socialism" has meant helping the Soviet Union, which in turn has meant helping the PLO. Thus, the "subordination of Cuban positions" required Cuba to break relations with Israel, as it did at

the Fourth Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in 1973 in Algiers. Before that, Castro had maintained relations with Israel despite strong demands from the Soviet Union and Arab countries.

Those relations, to be sure, had been on a fairly low level, but did mean that Cuba abstained from many of the more vicious propaganda and political attacks on Israel waged by the Arab countries. Since the 1973 break, however, the Castro government's rhetoric against Israel has been shrill and hostile.

The break between Cuba and Israel cemented the relationship between Cuba and the PLO, a goal of Soviet policy.

In the mid-1950's, the Soviet Union had begun pursuing alliances with Arab countries, less out of a desire for oil (the Soviet Union had and has plenty) than a desire to disrupt the relationships between Arab countries and the West, especially the United States.

The Soviet Union thus became a primary supplier of arms to Arab countries, such as Egypt throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, and more recently Syria. The Soviet Union encouraged the hostilities leading to the Six Day War in 1967, a policy which backfired in the humiliating defeat of the Arab countries by Israel.

Even Egypt's President Nasser, a strong Soviet ally in the Middle East, became somewhat disenchanted with Soviet aid. This meant the Soviets had to work harder than ever to court the Arab nations. By 1969 the Soviets had replaced all the military equipment lost by the Arabs in the 1967 war with Israel and by 1970 the Soviet Union had dispatched Soviet advisers to train the Egyptian army and to man missile sites at strategic points within Egypt.<sup>90</sup>

The Soviet Union also encouraged the development of the oil cartel and the political use of oil supplies, which proved very effective during and after the 1973 war with Israel. Ironically, their new-found economic power over the West also allowed the Arab countries to become more independent of the Soviet Union.

In response, the Soviet Union increased its support of more radical forces within the Arab world, such as Syria, Libya and the PLO.

The PLO had received some support in the form of military training from the Soviet Union in the 1960s and early 1970s. After the 1973 war, however, it became an intimate member of the Soviet family.<sup>91</sup> In 1975

<sup>86</sup>Yoram Shapira, "Cuba and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *op. cit.*, page 159.

<sup>87</sup>*Granma Weekly Review*, January 11, 1976, pages 2-3, and *Granma*, December 25, 1975.

<sup>88</sup>G.D. Ra'anan, *op. cit.*, page 33.

<sup>89</sup>*Granma Weekly Review*, January 4, 1976, page 10.

<sup>90</sup>*Political Dictionary of the Middle East in the 20th Century*, edited by Ya'acov Shimoni and Eviatar Levine, Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Company, 1974, page 332.

<sup>91</sup>Morris Rothenberg, "The Role of the Soviet Union: The Impact of 1967," *Middle East Review*, 1977, pages 37-42.

the PLO set up an office in Moscow, which was granted full diplomatic status in 1981.

By 1979 the PLO's United Nations representative Zehdi Terzi would say in a television interview, "Our boys go to the Soviet Union. They go to the Socialist countries. They go for their training, their education. Oh yes, we're getting direct consignments to the PLO — machine guns, RPG's [rocket propelled grenades], explosives, all that."<sup>92</sup>

#### IV Conclusion

Cuba plays a leading role in the international campaign against Israel. The Havana government trains PLO terrorists in Cuba and Castro has sent military units to several countries in the Middle East including Syria, Lebanon, South Yemen and Somalia.

The once prosperous Cuban Jewish community of about 12,000 people when Castro came to power has dwindled to less than 1,000, and the pejorative attacks of Castro's press against Israel has detrimentally effected Cuban Jews.

The relationship between Cuba and the PLO, though important to a thorough understanding of events in the Middle East and Central America, is often overlooked. The symbiotic relationship between the two has enabled Castro, despite his role in Latin America and Africa as a Soviet client and surrogate, to assume a leadership position in the Third World and within the non-aligned movement.

It has enabled the PLO to retain its firm ties with the Soviet Union, the major source of its arms and ideological direction, while proclaiming solidarity with forces of "liberation" and "revolution" in the Third World and elsewhere.

Massive arms depots and revealing documents found after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon confirmed that the Palestine Liberation Organization is part of a network of military training camps and arms distribution which provides support to guerrilla and terrorist groups in the Middle East, Europe and Central America. Terrorist groups no longer limit themselves to a single cause, but work together against what they now

regard to be common enemies — often unrelated to the cause justifying their existence.

Yet these connections are rarely mentioned by those whose illusion of an ideal world, buttressed by Soviet pronouncements, is far from the reality of the Middle East, Central America, Afghanistan, Poland and any number of other troubled regions. The response to these events is often to ignore the evidence, or to revise history.

The PLO assists Marxist-Leninist guerrillas half-way around the world because they are seen as fighting Israel's main ally, the United States. The intent is to drain U.S. energies and resources and to distract America from playing an active role in the Middle East.

And so the PLO, which presumably has little interest in the goings on in Central America, sends pilots and guerrillas to the area. Wealthy in a way few such organizations have ever been, because of the largess of Libya and other Arab states, the PLO has helped to fund violent actions against United States' interests. The PLO's money and arms in Nicaragua have helped ensure a new vote against Israel and the United States in every world forum.

This role of the PLO — far beyond its territorial claims in the Middle East — must be clearly seen. And so must that of Cuba.

PLO aid to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the FMLN in El Salvador is probably not massive enough to represent a serious diversion of the PLO's resources, but it is a significant factor. The PLO also plays a role in the international propaganda campaign on behalf of the Sandinista government and Salvadoran and Guatemalan guerrillas. It would be a mistake to ignore the partnership, pretending that the alliance between Castro and the PLO does not exist or has no influence. U.S. policymakers must be aware of these dangers in order to develop both prudent and effective policies towards the Middle East and Central America.

<sup>92</sup>Claire Sterling, *The Terror Network*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1981, page 277.

## V KEY DATES

- 1959 Castro revolution overthrows Batista.  
Cuba and Israel establish diplomatic relations.
- 1966 Tricontinental Conference in Havana. First major forum in which Cuba and the PLO both participate. Author Claire Sterling calls this conference a clear call for a "Guerrilla International."
- 1967 More than a dozen training camps for guerrillas established in Cuba, under the direction of KGB Col. Vadim Kotchergine. Among others, Palestinians are trained.  
The Six Day War breaks out.  
Although Cuba denounced Israel, it also criticized the Arab countries for not fighting bravely. Castro refuses to break relations with Israel.
- 1970 PLO hijacks three planes and fails in a fourth attempt. When they take two planes to Jordan, it provokes the "Black September". In the failed attempt Sandinista Patrick Arguello was killed. Venezuelan Illich Ramirez Sanchez (Carlos the Jackal) who had been trained in Cuba, fights in Jordan with the PLO.
- 1972 Cuba joins COMECON.
- 1973 Castro announces major Soviet aid package to Cuba.  
Castro attends the Fourth Conference of Non-Aligned Nations. When challenged as a Soviet representative (and therefore unqualified to be in the conference of non-aligned nations), Castro agrees to break relations with Israel.  
Yom Kippur War.  
Immediately after the war, Cuban tank troops are airlifted to Syria and, according to the *Economist Foreign Report*, engage Israelis in battle during the Syrian-Israeli "war of attrition."
- 1975 "Zionism is Racism" resolution is adopted by the U.N. General Assembly, co-sponsored by Cuba.
- 1976 By this time, Cuban troops are in 10 countries from Angola and Somalia to South Yemen.

- 1979 Sandinistas overthrow Somoza in Nicaragua. Immediately before, a PLO plane ostensibly carrying food and medical supplies is unloaded in Tunis and found to be carrying arms.
- 1980 Castro, Arafat and El Salvador guerrilla leaders meet in Managua on the occasion of the Sandinista's first anniversary of power, reportedly to plan military shipments to El Salvador.
- 1981 PLO arranges Libyan loan to Nicaragua of \$100 million.  
PLO arranges Libyan loan to Cuba of nearly \$50 million.

## VI Chronology of Events Cuba, Israel and the PLO — 1974-1982

The following is a listing of contacts between Cuban and PLO officials from 1974 to 1982, culled from newspapers, radio reports and other official sources of news, except where noted. While not a comprehensive list of contacts, it does give some idea of their range and diversity.

*November, 1974*

Arafat enthusiastically received in Havana with all honors due a head of state and awarded the special distinction of being given Cuba's foremost decoration, the Order of the *Playa Giron* [Bay of Pigs]. A joint Cuban-PLO communique is issued in *Granma Weekly Review* on December 1, 1974.

*September 8, 1975*

A delegation from the political department of the PLO is received by Osmany Cienfuegos, brother of Camilo Cienfuegos, a hero of the revolution.

*September 20, 1975*

The Cuban Ambassador to Lebanon Miguel Brugeret meets with Yasser Arafat to confirm Cuban solidarity with the Palestinian cause.

*March 4, 1976*

Castro meets with the PLO delegation in Moscow.

*May 15, 1976*

Day of solidarity with Palestinian people is held in Cuba.

*November 19, 1976*

Arafat meets Cuban Ambassador Arturo Barber Orozco in Syria.

*November 23, 1976*

Cuban U.N. Ambassador Ricardo Alarcon voices Cuban support for Palestinian people at the U.N.

*January 3-12, 1977*

Nayif Hawatmah, Secretary General of the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP), visits Cuba. On January 5, meets with Castro.

*July 28, 1977*

According to Lebanese newspaper *A-Siyad*, Cuban ambassador in Cyprus is found to have a central role in transferring arms to the PLO.

*February 25, 1978*

Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, a member of the Executive Bureau of the ruling PSP, meets with a delegation from Fatah's Revolutionary Council and the PLO's Central Council in Havana.

*March 19, 1978*

Cuban Foreign Ministry issues communique protesting Israel's attack on Southern Lebanon.

*April 2, 1978*

The Cuban ambassador to Lebanon, Alberto Velazco, meets Arafat in Beirut.

*April 7, 1978*

Lebanese newspaper *Al Mukhrar* reports that Cuban advisers are in PLO bases in Southern Lebanon, in accord with an agreement signed between the PLO and Cuba.

*April and May, 1978.*

*The Times* of London, *Rheinischer Merkur* of West Germany, and *Al-Anba'a* of Kuwait report that Cuban units in Lebanon are reinforced following a meeting between Castro and George Habash, in Cuba.

*May 30, 1978*

Abu Iyad confirms to Reuters news service that PLO personnel are in training camps in Cuba.

*June 10, 1978*

Shafik Al-Hut, director of PLO's Beirut Bureau, meets with Castro at the non-aligned conference in Cuba.

*June 17, 1978*

Cuban ambassador to Syria, Arturo Barber, meets with Abu Mayzar, PLO spokesman in Damascus.

*June 22, 1978*

During Havana visit, Arafat signs agreement for military cooperation and arms supply.

July 24, 1978

Nayif Hawatmah visits Cuba; in Moscow Arafat signs agreement by which Cuba will set up military installations in Lebanon and send advisors to run them, according to *A-Nahar*.

July 26, 1978

Arafat goes to Cuba for a youth festival.

September 13, 1978

500 Palestinians leave for training in Cuba, according to Egyptian newspaper *Ahar Sa'ah*.

September 19, 1978

Fidel Castro states at press conference in Algiers that the Camp David Agreement is the consummation of treachery.

October 11, 1978

Arafat deputy, Abu Iyad meets with Cuban ambassador in Beirut and discusses aid and Cuban military advisers for PLO.

December 31, 1978

PLO delegation meets with the Cuban ambassador in Beirut.

January 22, 1979

Jose Alvarez Bravo heads delegation to the 14th Palestine National Council meeting in Damascus and meets with Arafat.

February 12, 1979

Israeli Prime Minister Begin warns that it is possible that soldiers from Cuba will enter South Yemen and endanger Saudi Arabia.

March 17, 1979

*Granma* has long article critical of Middle East peace accord and US involvement.

March 24, 1979

Farouk Khaddoumi visits the Cuban Ambassador in Beirut.

April 24, 1979

Nayif Hawatmah meets with the Cuban Transport Minister.

April 25, 1979

Cuban Foreign Trade Minister, Marcelo Fernandez Font, meets with Arafat to deliver message from Castro.

June 5, 1979

Cuban Foreign Minister Isidoro Malmierca meets PLO Executive Committee member Abd al-Muhsi Abu Mayza in Damascus.

June 26, 1979

Arafat meets with the Cuban ambassador in Beirut.

July 24, 1979

Arafat meets Cuban Vice President Guillermo Garcia Frias to discuss forthcoming Non-Aligned Summit meeting.

August 30, 1979

Cuba proposes military support for the PLO at the Non-Aligned Summit meeting.

November 2, 1979

Jorge Lezcano, member of the PSP's [Cuban Communist Party] Central Committee, heads a delegation to a solidarity meeting with the PLO held in Lisbon and chaired by Arafat.

November 7, 1979

Arafat meets with Cuban ambassador in Beirut.

November 28, 1979

*The Economist* "Foreign Report" says that the PLO and Cuba are cooperating in training terrorist groups in Central America.

February 24, 1980

Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP) delegation returns from visits to Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and the USSR.

April 11, 1980

Arafat meets with Cuban foreign minister in Damascus.

June 26, 1980

Juan Aguero, Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions (CTC) member denounces the US for supporting Israel while attending the 66th meeting of the International Labor Organization in Geneva.

October 27, 1980

Cuban information delegation visits Tyre.

December 8, 1980

Castro sends a message to Arafat, according to PLO radio.

December 15, 1980

Damascus Radio reports that Arafat received a communique from Castro.

January, 1981

A delegation of the PFLP wing of the PLO, led by Tuissir Khaled, participates in the Cuban Communist Party convention.

January 31, 1981

A-Saiqa leader meets Cuban ambassador in Damascus.

February 15, 1981

Cuban deputy economic minister visits Tyre, refugee camps.

March 11, 1981

Arafat meets Cuban Foreign Minister in Beirut.

March 30, 1981

Arafat and Khaddoumi meet Cuban Foreign Minister.

April 30, 1981

Abu Iyad, Arafat's deputy, meets Cuban attache in Beirut.

October 5, 1981

Farouk Khaddoumi visits Havana to talk with Castro, accompanied by PLO representatives from East Germany and the U.N.

October 19, 1981

Cuban parliamentary delegation meets Arafat and Khaddoumi in Damascus.

November 3, 1981

PDFLP delegation in Cuba.

November 13, 1981

Cuban Foreign Minister visits Arafat in Beirut.

December 6, 1981

PLO delegation visits Cuban Embassy in Beirut.

December 16, 1981

Abu Khatem, head of Fatah's foreign relations, meets Cuban Charge d'Affaires.

December 26, 1981

PLO U.N. Observer Zehdi Terzi visits Cuba.

March 22, 1982

Nayif Hawatmah, accompanied by Abou Abham, member of the Popular Democratic Front's Political Bureau and Charaf Odeh, representative of the Front in Latin America, meet with Fidel Castro and key members of the Politburo and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba.

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*Note on Sources:*

Most newspapers and periodicals listed in the footnotes are not included in the bibliography.

## APPENDIX

Letter from a member of Palestinian Popular Front  
in Cuba to a friend in Lebanon.  
Found by Israeli armed forces in Lebanon in 1982.

### PRIVATE LETTER TO: COMRADE ABU-HASSAM!

On the occasion of the 13th Anniversary of the establishment of our Front, I send you Revolutionary Greetings and wish you many operations and achievement of victories.

*(Regards and questions about the health of the family, and then the letter continues. . .)*

As regards Santiago we had a big celebration and it was successful: V.I.P.s took part and the events were shown on TV, because this was one of the most important events in Cuba.

The Fatah tried through the office of the Liberation Organization to pressure the Cubans not to carry out the celebration and they moved the site of the celebration from the university hall to the International Friendship and Solidarity House. But they did not succeed, we did not invite the Fatah to celebrate with us so as not to cause problems. Every year they try to disrupt the celebrations.

*(The writer reports that he succeeded in his studies, apparently Medicine, and says that he studied Dialectics, History and Political Economics of Capitalism and Socialism and now he is studying the Cuban and the world workers movement. He comments that he will complete a Party course in addition to Medicine.)*

As for the General Union of Palestinian Students, the Fatah is trying to thwart its activities. The *El-Heriya* (periodical) reaches us regularly.

Why are shelters not being built in Damur?

How are the relations with the El Amal Organization after the recent exchange of fire with them?

How is the arming process progressing?

This summer Halil Nasser is expected to visit Lebanon and he will fill you in on the situation in Cuba.

The Fatah man in charge here in Santiago is Mahmud Abu El Tafah. He is from the Nahar El Bared Camp and hates the Front blindly, because, as you know, they comprise several groups and they constantly move further and further away from the national unity.

From one who misses you,

(-)

Hassun

17 March 1982

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